## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510 March 12, 2013

The Honorable Charles T. Hagel Secretary of Defense 100 Defense Pentagon Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Hagel,

I am deeply concerned about the recent decision by the Air Force, Army and the Marine Corps to suspend the tuition assistance program. While I recognize that sequestration is forcing the Department of Defense to make difficult budgetary decisions, I believe that denying educational opportunities to our servicemembers is the wrong way to find savings, and I fear this decision will inhibit the Air Force, Army and Marine Corps from developing the highly skilled forces they need to succeed in this current environment.

Thousands of servicemembers utilize the tuition assistance program to complete a high school diploma, earn college credit, or complete a degree. The services benefit from the tuition assistance program by providing their best and brightest with the opportunity to continue developing their skills and furthering education while on active duty. Tuition Assistance also enhances the professionalism of the Active, Guard, and Reserve forces by helping servicemembers more fully develop their skills, serves as an important tool to retain them in the military, and prepares those who choose to leave the military for a successful transition into the civilian workforce.

Again, I recognize that Congress' inability to address our long-term fiscal challenges has forced the Department to make many difficult budget decisions. However, senior defense officials have continually discussed the dangers of creating a hollow force. I agree that we should not hollow out our most critical asset – the brave men and women serving this Nation. Completely suspending this program, rather than simply reducing its funding by an amount proportionate to the cuts mandated by sequestration, is an alarming decision.

I urge the Department to reconsider the suspension of Tuition Assistance in the Air Force, Army and Marine Corps, and to prevent the Navy from pursing similar actions. I believe the Department can find other, lower priority areas to make reductions to allow our servicemembers to continue receiving tuition assistance.

Sincerely,

Kay R. Hagan

United States Senator

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